'Beautiful and Pure? – Standardization and Aesthetics in Linguistic Purism
of the Early Modern Period'

Call for papers for the conference scheduled by project A03 within the CRC 1391

Different Aesthetics

Tübingen, 14-16 march 2022

Aspirations towards linguistic purity have a long tradition: as early as in classical grammar and rhetoric, purity of language and expression (*puritas sermonis*, *sermo purus*) is a fundamental prerequisite for well-formed, 'beautiful' speech. During the early modern period, the concept of *puritas sermonis* undergoes a broad reception along with classical rhetoric. In a comparison of classical reflections on linguistic purity (especially in Quintilian) with their revival from the 15th until the 18th century, shifts in arguments, scope and contexts become apparent: in the classical period, puristic arguments are essentially limited to grammar and theory of style (*elocutio*). Initially, it is not so much the language system (*lingua / langue*) which is judged to be 'pure' or 'impure', but rather the individual language use (*sermo / parole*). During the early modern period, then, there is a change or a shift: In Italy, for example, Lionardo Salviati, who was to be crucial in advancing the *Accademia della Crusca*'s work on dictionaries, stresses that for "scritture, adunque che lungamente restar debbano in vita, le pure voci solamente convengono, e i puri favellari." (*Avvertimenti,* 1584). The *Académie française* states as its main objective to render the French language in its entirety "pure, éloquente et capable de traiter les arts et les sciences" (art. 24 of its statutes); and in Germany, Georg Philipp Harsdörffer describes his project with the term of "Spracharbeit" ('work on language', *Schutzschrift für die Teutsche Spracharbeit*, 1644). Accordingly, languages as a whole are perceived in terms of being pure or impure, cultivated or barbaric. The debate on 'pure language' translates into a plurality of models for normalization which enter into a competition with each other, in large part due to different conceptions of the (im)pure and the (un)beautiful. These models provide the theoretical basis for an institutionalized language policy, since they provide the basis for practices of standardization which are implemented in particular by language academies and language societies. Linguistic purism in its different forms hence also acquires programmatic meaning for the constitution of the European vernaculars. It becomes part of a language and identity policy which, in different constellations and resulting in various intercultural exchange processes, influences the whole of Europe.

Recently, academic research has shown that issues concerning the standardization of language in the early modern period are closely interconnected with general processes of pluralization, practices of authorization and 'normative centring' ("normative Zentrierung", as Berndt Hamm calls it).The praxeological model, as put forward by the CRC 1391 *Different Aesthetics* which examines acts and artefacts from the European pre-modern era within the dynamic field of tension between an autological and a heterological dimension, underscores the heterological sphere : On the one hand, more or less puristic language-theoretical texts employ figures and metaphors taken from social systems – for instance, they refer to judicial, religious, political and moral issues; on the other hand, 'beautiful' speech is increasingly seen as a vital aspect of social conduct. In the discourse on the ideal courtier (*Il Cortegiano* by Castiglione, 1528), for example, the standardization of language plays an essential role in the standardization of courtly manners; for *sprezzatura*, the concept of ideal courtly behaviour, combines the rhetorical and poetological concepts of *dissimulatio* and *elegantia*. 'Beautiful' speech is part of performing 'beautifully' and correctly at court. Whereas in France Claude Favre de Vaugelas merely accepts "la façon de parler de la plus saine partie de la Cour, conformément à la façon d'escrire de la plus saine partie des Autheurs du temps" (Préface in *Remarques sur la langue françoise*, 1647) as a model example of 'beautiful' parlance, in Italy numerous different models for standardization are developed. What is striking here is the relationship between the pure/impure and the beautiful/ugly, because, for Castiglione, it is indeed not 'pure' language that is 'beautiful' but, instead, the 'impure' prism of eclecticism.

The planned interdisciplinary conference explores such underlying socio-cultural conditions as well as the interplay between the different linguistic purisms of early modern Europe. The focus is on puristic arguments and processes of standardization in Italy, France and Germany that will serve as examples in order to examine how autological and heterological references intertwine in different discourse and genre traditions – ranging from linguistic treatises, poetics, grammars and dictionaries to letters, translations and satirical texts. Objects of analysis include concrete practices, institutions and players involved in language regulation as well as the imagery of linguistic purity and purification. Thus, our key questions are the following: How are the demands for beauty and purity of language and speech connected, and how is this connection justified in a normative sense (e.g. by referring to older forms of the language or regional varieties)? How is the plurality of alternative and competing models, authorities and regulations dealt with? How do the various European linguistic purisms interact, and what are the particularities that develop in individual language areas? What role does linguistic purism

play in the development of the European literatures in the early modern period? Which different phases can we distinguish? In what way(s) do individual discourse traditions come into play? Which institutions (e.g. language academies, language societies) and players are involved in these processes, and what institutional form do they take?

The conference aims at discussing these (and other) questions in a comparative and interdisciplinary setup. We welcome contributions from literary studies and linguistics, language history and cultural studies as well as analyses from related disciplines which explore the link between the categories of 'beautiful' and 'pure' or which analyse in what way the autological and the heterological dimension, i.e. the aesthetic logic of everyday life and the inner artistic logic, are tightly and dynamically intertwined.

The conference will be held in German, English, French and Italian. Please send your proposals for talks to sarah.dessi@uni-tuebingen.de, eva-katharina.fezer@uni-tuebingen.de and joerg.robert@uni-tuebingen.de (please send everything to all three addresses) by 15 December 2021, along with an informative synopsis (max. 400 words, in one of the conference's languages) and a short CV in a PDF file.

The contributions will be published in a conference volume. If permitted by the coronavirus pandemic, the conference will be held as a face-to-face event with appropriate hygienic precautions, or else it will take place as a hybrid event. In our capacity as conference organizers, we will try our best to respond to the wishes and needs of the participants.